



41 APR 98

ROBINSON
ERSKINE

ABSOLUTION IN BLOOD

STARMAN



GRAY PRISON,
SOUTH OF OPAL.
SOUTH OF OLD
TOWN ALLEYS.

NICER THAN MOST.
CLEANER. ONE RIOT IN '54.
ONLY SEVEN ESCAPEES IN
ITS WHOLE HISTORY.

THE PRISONERS KNOW A
GOOD THING. THEY TOE
THE LINE. MOST OF
THEM. THERE WAS THE
MIST (THE ELDER) AND
HIS DAUGHTER MIST
(THE YOUNGER). AND
THERE WAS RAGDOLL.
THESE THREE CAUSED
SOME STRIFE. A FEW
GUARDS DIED.

AND THERE WAS ONE
OTHER. A BAD, BAD MAN.
KILLER WASP. HIS CAPTURE
BY WILDCAT MADE THE
NEWS... HIS EXPLOSIVE
ESCAPE AND BLOODY
RECAPTURE DID, TOO.

BUT HIS ATTACKS ON GUARDS
AND FELLOW INMATES... KILLINGS
AND DISFIGUREMENTS - THE
PRISON GOVERNOR WAS KEEN THAT
THOSE TERRIBLE ACTIONS BY
THE WASP REMAIN UNDISCLOSED
TO THE PUBLIC... THAT THE
PEOPLE OF OPAL FELT SAFE
(AND HE WAS SEVEN YEARS FROM
RETIRING AND DIDN'T NEED THE
BAD PUBLICITY.)

SO HE HAD A SMALL, SPECIAL WING
BUILT. AND ALTHOUGH THE WASP IS
OLD NOW, THE PLACE STILL CARRIES
THE NAME THE GUARDS CHRISTENED
IT BACK THEN.

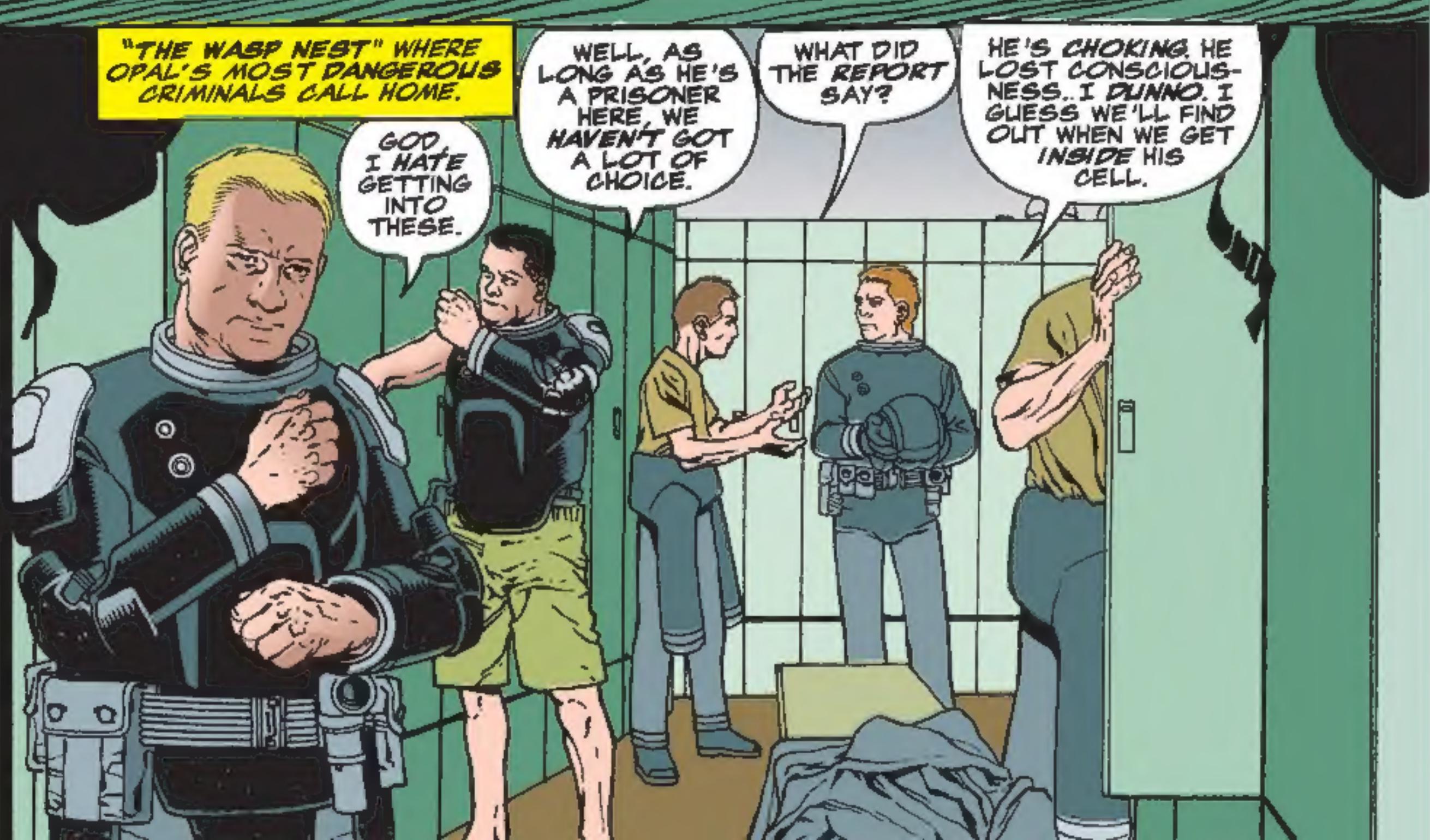
"THE WASP NEST" WHERE
OPAL'S MOST DANGEROUS
CRIMINALS CALL HOME.

GOD,
I HATE
GETTING
INTO
THESE.

WELL, AS
LONG AS HE'S
A PRISONER
HERE, WE
HAVEN'T GOT
A LOT OF
CHOICE.

WHAT DID
THE REPORT
SAY?

HE'S CHOKING. HE
LOST CONSCIOUS-
NESS.. I DUNNO. I
GUESS WE'LL FIND
OUT WHEN WE GET
INSIDE HIS
CELL.



I'M THINKING OF CALLING JUNE AND ASKING HER OUT.

JUNE? WHO, JUNE?

YOUR SISTER, DUMMY.

OH, JUNE.

I WAS HOPING YOU WOULDN'T MIND.

WHY WOULD I, YOU'RE MY BUDDY! COURSE IF YOU LAY A FINGER ON HER, I'LL BE SERVING TIME HERE FOR KILLING YOU.

NO, I'M SERIOUS. I LIKE HER. WE ALWAYS TALK AND SHE MAKES ME LAUGH, WHENEVER I COME OVER WITH THE GUYS FOR POKER.

YEAH, WELL SHE'D KILL ME IF I TOLD YOU, BUT HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHY SHE'S THERE ON THOSE NIGHTS?

NO.

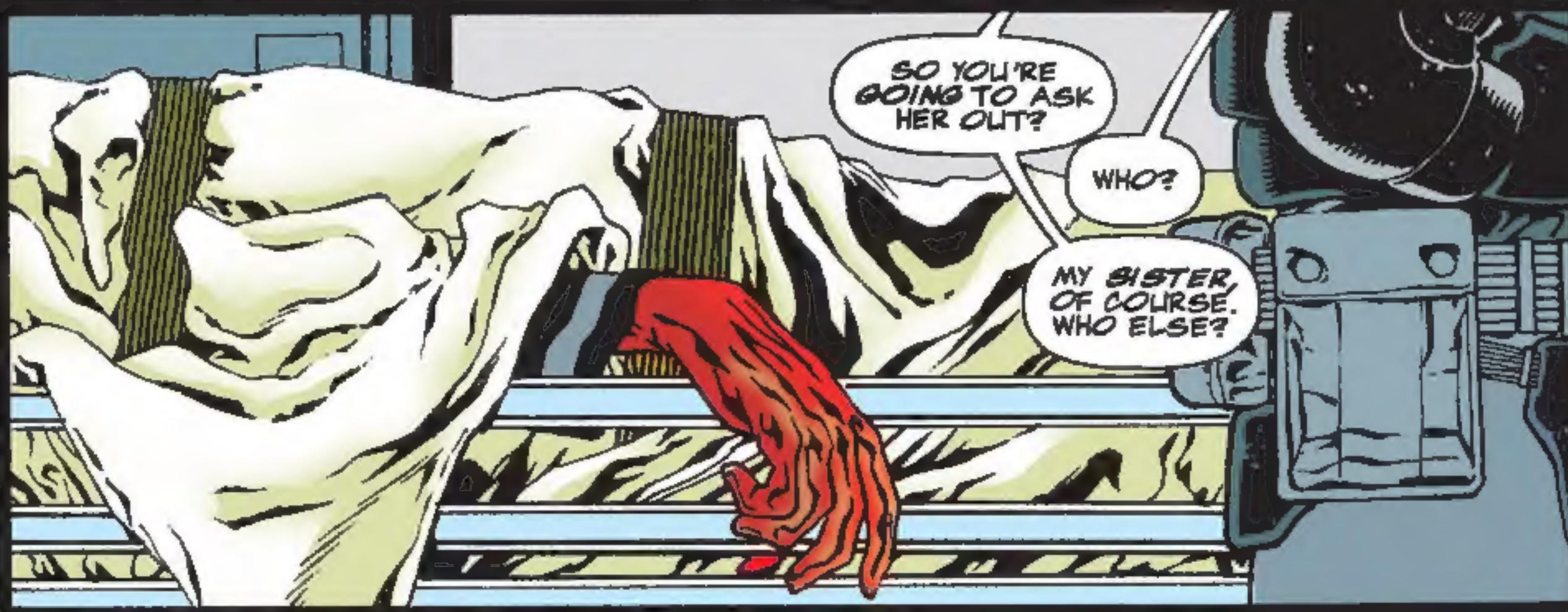
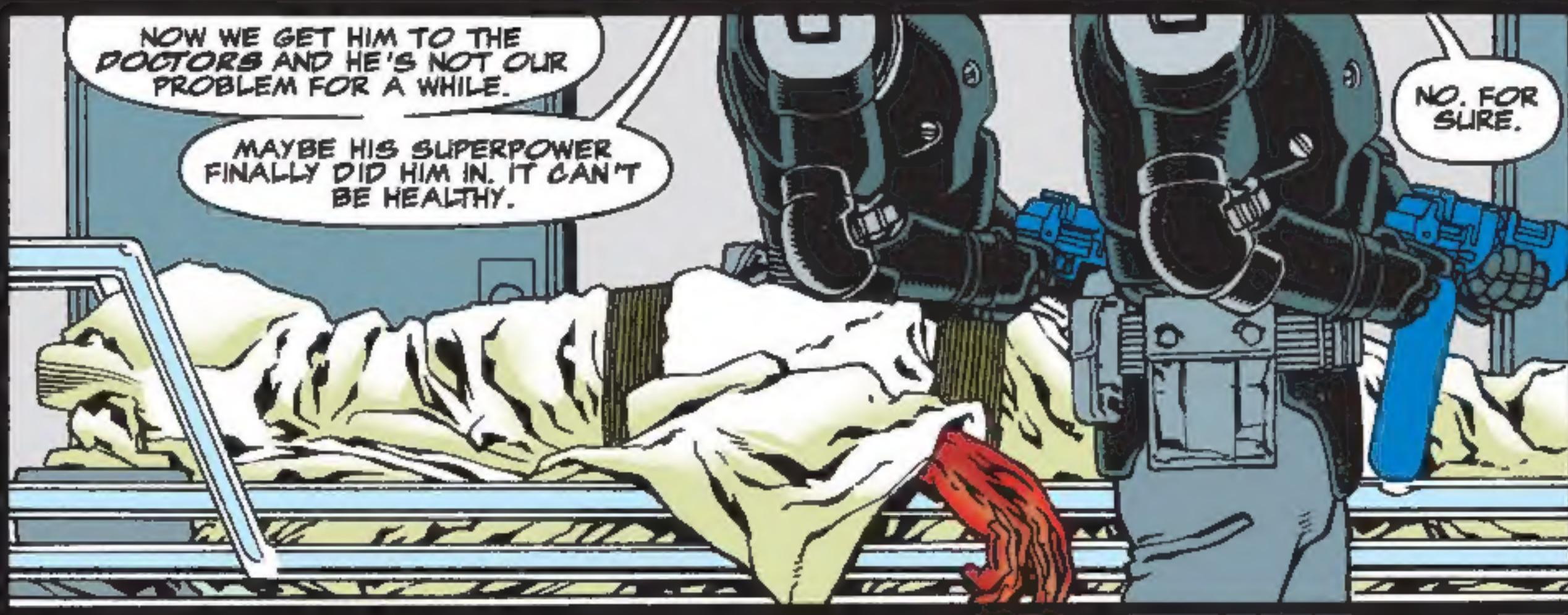
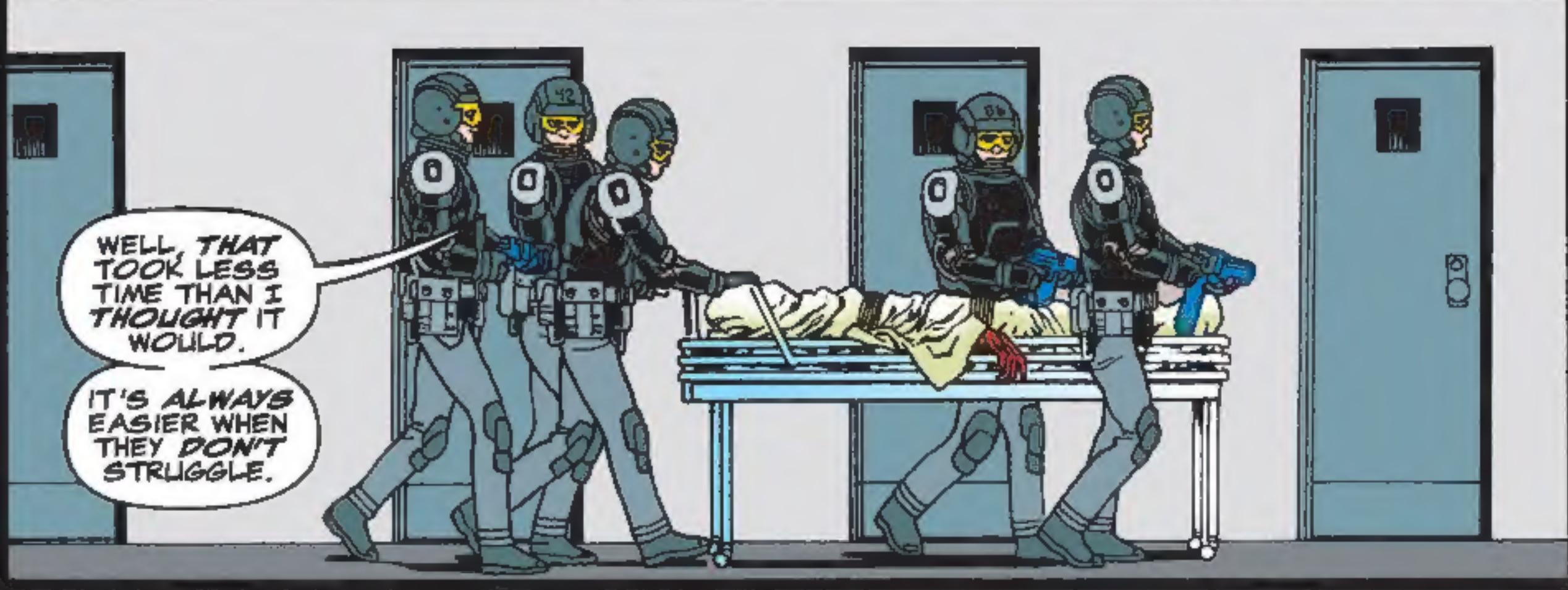
POKER NIGHT IS WHEN WIVES AND SISTERS AND MOTHERS ALL GO OUT TO MOVIES OR SCRAM SOMEWHERE. NOTHING TURNS THEM OFF MORE THAN SEEING A BLINCH OF GUYS SITTING AROUND A TABLE WITH A DECK OF CARDS.

YET MY SISTER STAYS.

WHY IS THAT?

'CAUSE SHE LIKES YOU, SHERLOCK.

SHE'S BEEN NAGGING ME WHEN I THOUGHT YOU'D ASK HER OUT. ME, I'M JUST RELIEVED I'LL BE SPARED HER ASKING FROM NOW ON.



VILLAIN'S REDEMPTION



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...NOW
REACH
FOR YOUR
GUNS...

AS SCALPHUNTER
WOULD HAVE SAID.

THOUGH
NEITHER OF
THESE MEN...

...OF
COURSE...

...ARE SCALP-
HUNTER...

BRIAN SAVAGE, THE
WESTERN LAWMAN WHO WAS
SHERIFF OF OPAL AS THE
YEAR 1899 GREW OLD AND
DIED, IS LONG DEAD, TOO.

BUT THIS DUET OF BLACK
AND BULLET DOES SHARE
A CONNECTION WITH
SAVAGE OF YORE.

ONE, AN IMMORTAL, WAS
ALIVE THEN. HE WAS THE
SHERIFF'S FRIEND.



AND THE OTHER WAS
BRIAN SAVAGE IN A
PREVIOUS INCARNATION.

HE HAS BEEN
REBORN.

A
REPENTANT
SINNER.

AND THE
MEN WHO
DIE?

THESE ARE BAD
MEN? THEY ARE NO
BETTER THAN THEIR
FATES. VILE MEN.
THEY DESERVE
THEIR DEATHS.



OR SO MATT O'DARE SAYS TO HIMSELF... OVER AND OVER... JUSTIFICATION FOR EACH SHOT FIRED.

THE SHADE, ON THE OTHER HAND, HUMS A MELODY UNDER HIS BREATH AND JUSTIFIES HIS ACTIONS NOT AT ALL.

FOR SUCH DOUBTS REQUIRE CONSCIENCE... AND THE MAN IN BLACK HAS NONE.



WELL,
THAT LOOKS
LIKE IT.

RECORD
TIME, TOO.
YOU'RE
GETTING
BETTER.



BETTER AT
WHAT? KILLING IN COLD
BLOOD? IT'S A TALENT I
HOPE TO GET WORSE AT
FOR WANT OF PRACTICE
AS SOON AS I CAN.

COLD BLOOD?
DID WE NOT GIVE
THESE FOOLS AN
OPTION? AN EASY
OPTION AT THAT.

AND DID THEY NOT
REFUSE? DID THEY NOT
DRAW THEIR GUNS?

I GUESS.

AND THEN
THE FUN
BEGAN.
IT WASN'T
FUN.

OKAY,
IT WAS A
LITTLE BIT
FUN. BUT
THAT
DOESN'T
MEAN I'M
NOT
GUILTY.

BELIEVE AN
OLD DEBAUCHER
LIKE ME, ONLY THE
MOST EXQUISITE
OF PLEASURES
ARE CAPABLE OF
INDUCING A GUILTY
NEXT MORNING
TASTE.

WHY ARE
YOU DOING
THIS? WHY ARE
YOU HELPING
ME?

YOU WERE A
DIRTY COP. YOU HAVE
DECIDED TO REFORM. I
HAVE HELPED YOU
ELIMINATE ALL THOSE
WHO WOULD INFORM
AGAINST YOU... THOSE
YOU COULD NOT SCARE
OR REASON WITH.

WHAT DO
I GET FROM
THIS?

I GET A GOOD
POLICEMAN IN THE
CITY I ADORE.

SINCE WHEN
DO YOU CARE
ABOUT GOOD
POLICEMEN?

OH, I
CARE. IN
OPAL I
CARE.

AND WHEN YOU WERE IN HELL, WHEN YOU ESCAPED THE DEMON'S CLUTCHES, JACK TOLD ME HE HEARD YOU YELL THAT NOT ONLY WERE YOU GOING TO GET AWAY, BUT YOU WERE GOING TO RESCUE ME AND TAKE ME WITH YOU.



YOU'RE DOING THIS OUT OF GRATITUDE?

NO, THAT ISN'T IT. THAT WASN'T WHY I JUMPED INTO HELL AFTER YOU IN THE FIRST PLACE.



BUT AM I SAVAGE? I DON'T REMEMBER ANY OF HIS TIME. I...AM I WORTHY OF HIM?

I LIVE IN HOPE.

THEN?

ANYWAY, HOW MANY MORE BEFORE WE'RE DONE?

BRIAN SAVAGE WAS MY FRIEND.

LAST TWO NAMES ON THE LIST I MADE. ONE, AN INNOCENT WORKADAY GUY. HE GOT CAUGHT UP IN THE MOB LIKE ME.

AND THE OTHER?



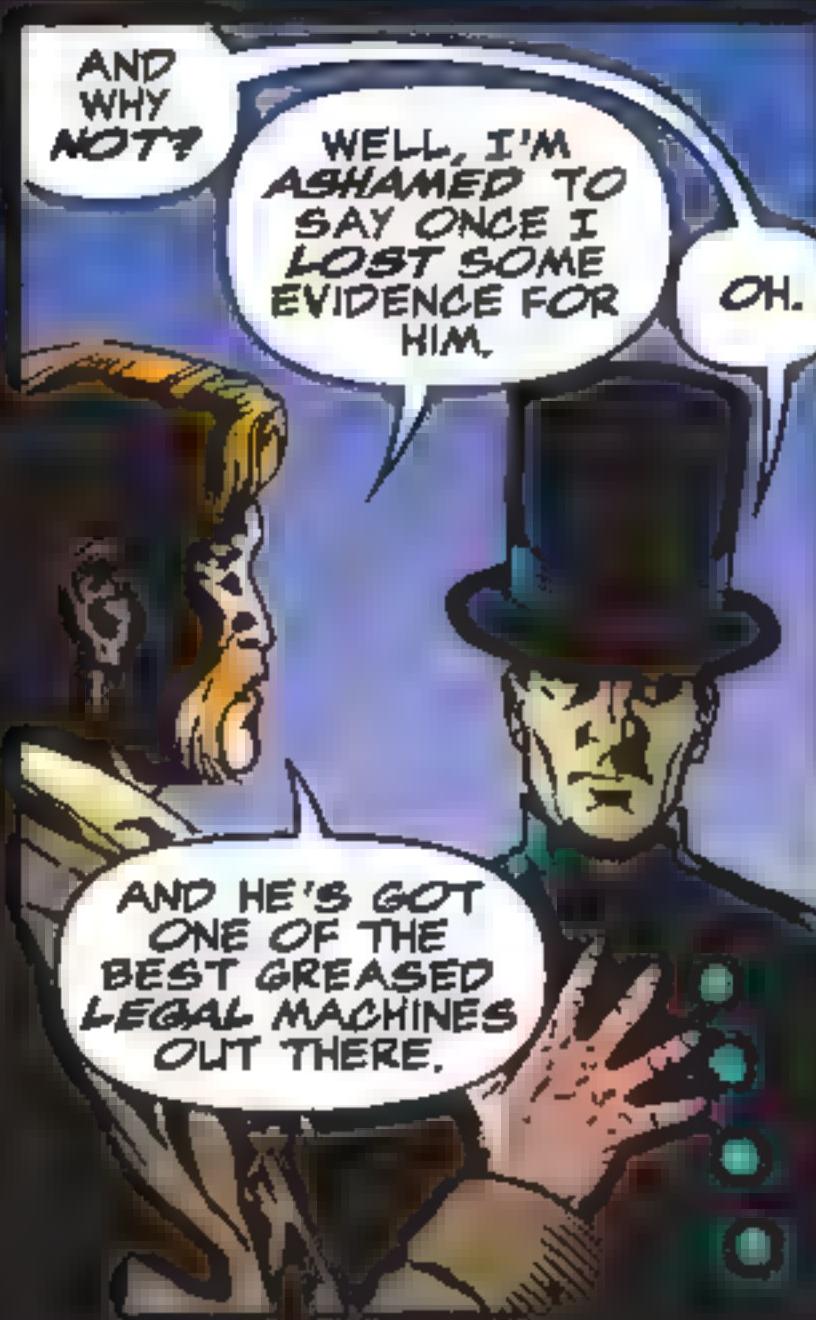
THEN I SUGGEST WE SPLIT UP...DIVIDE AND WE CAN TOAST AN END TO THIS ALL THE EARLIER.

YOU TAKE THE WORKADAY GUY.

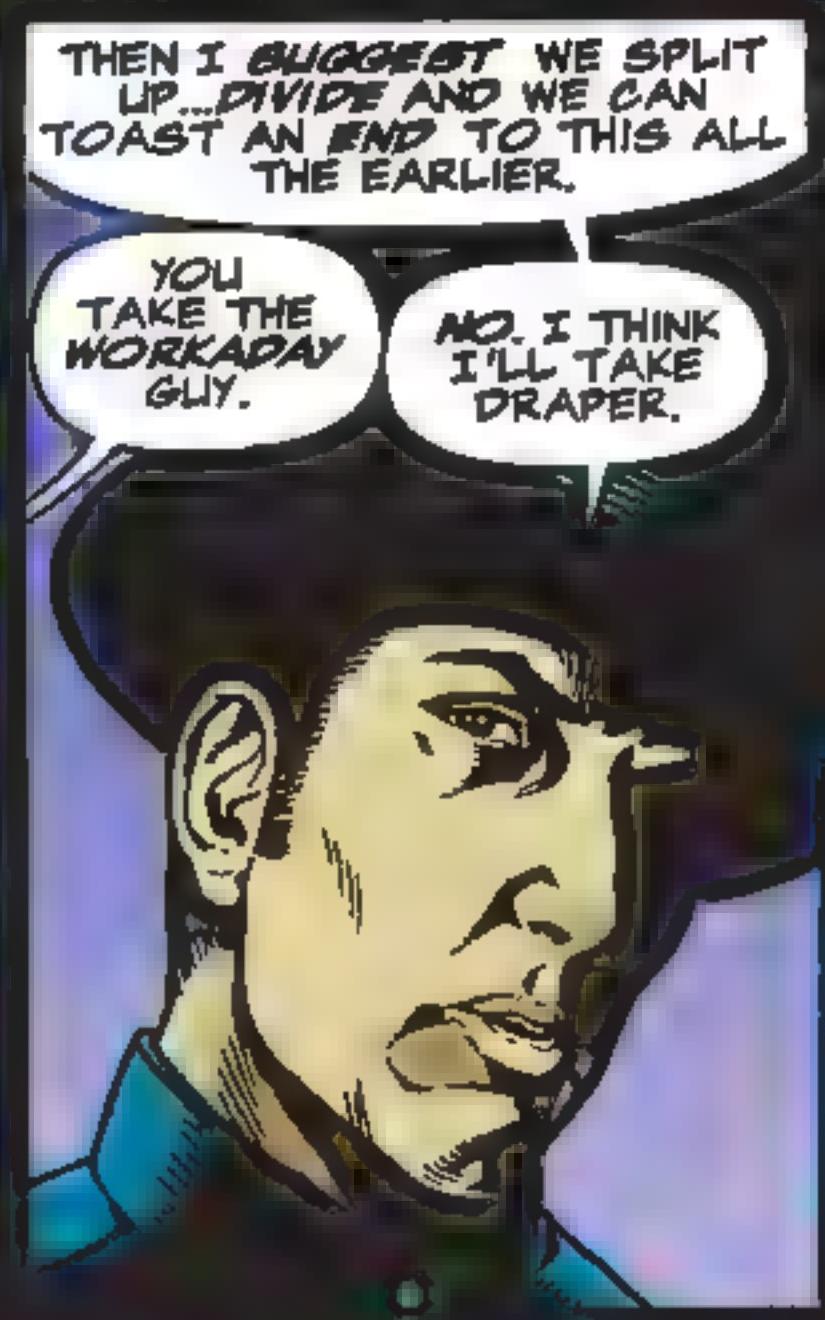
NO, I THINK I'LL TAKE DRAPER.

AND WE WILL MEET TO DEAL WITH THE ONE OTHER PERSON WHO COULD BRING YOU DOWN BY REVEALING YOUR PAST CORRUPTION. THE ONE NAME YOU LEFT OFF YOUR LIST.

UM...YEAH. I GUESS.



AND HE'S GOT ONE OF THE BEST GREASED LEGAL MACHINES OUT THERE.



CARL EARL SHIFTS IN HIS SEAT. HE CHANGES THE CHANNEL FROM A DUMB "NO-CORE" COP THING ON HBO TO THE NEWS.

"THERE'S A LOT OF BAD GOING ON," HE THINKS. "A LOT."

"I'M JUST GLAD ME AND MINE ARE ALL RIGHT."

HE REACHES FOR A CIGARETTE THEN REALIZES HIS POCKET IS EMPTY. A PROMISE TO HIS WIFE. FOR THE BOY'S SAKE.

HIS WIFE FINISHES LOADING THE DISHES AND THEN SITS BY HIS SIDE. THEIR SON PLAYS IN HIS CRIB.

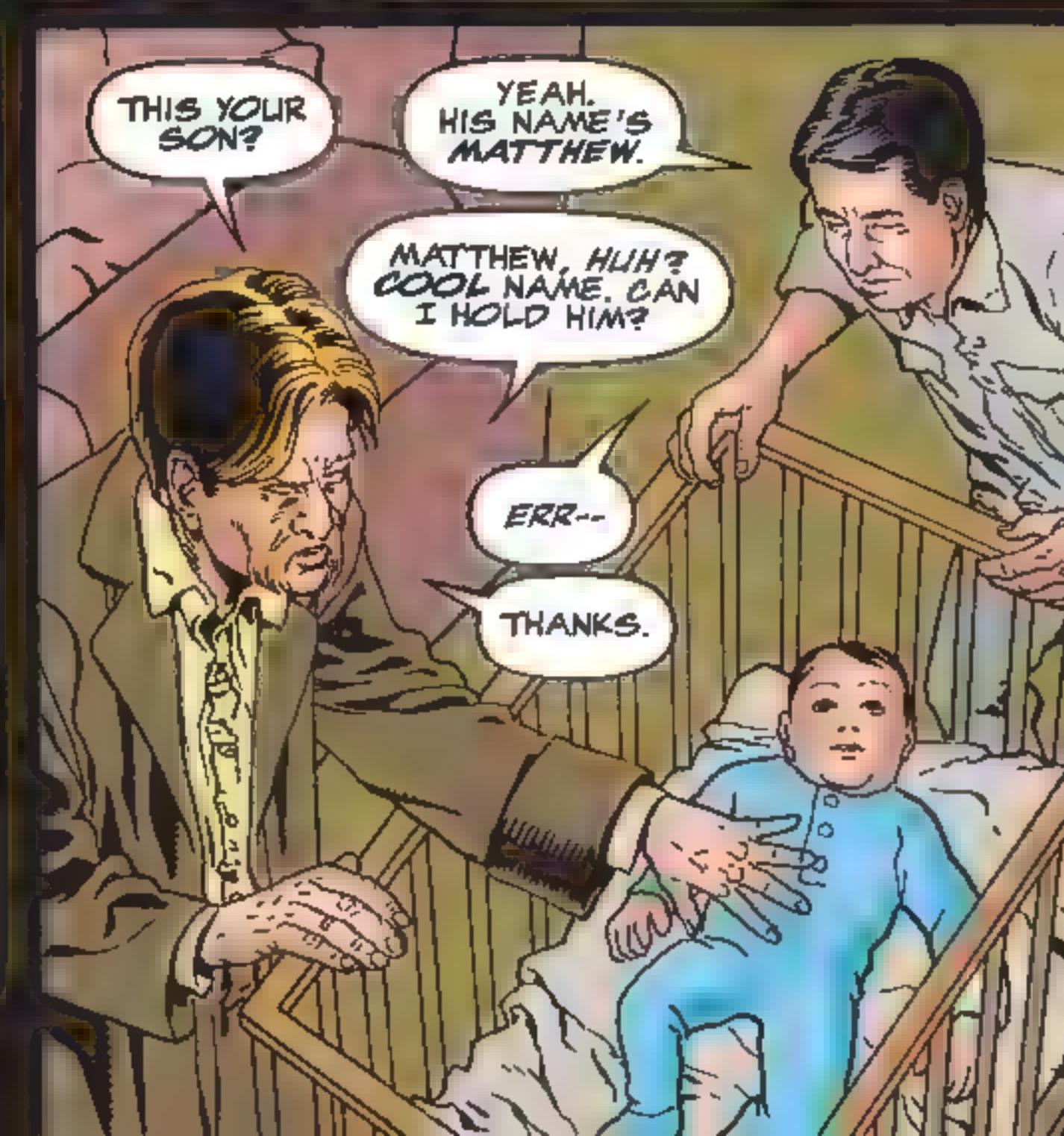
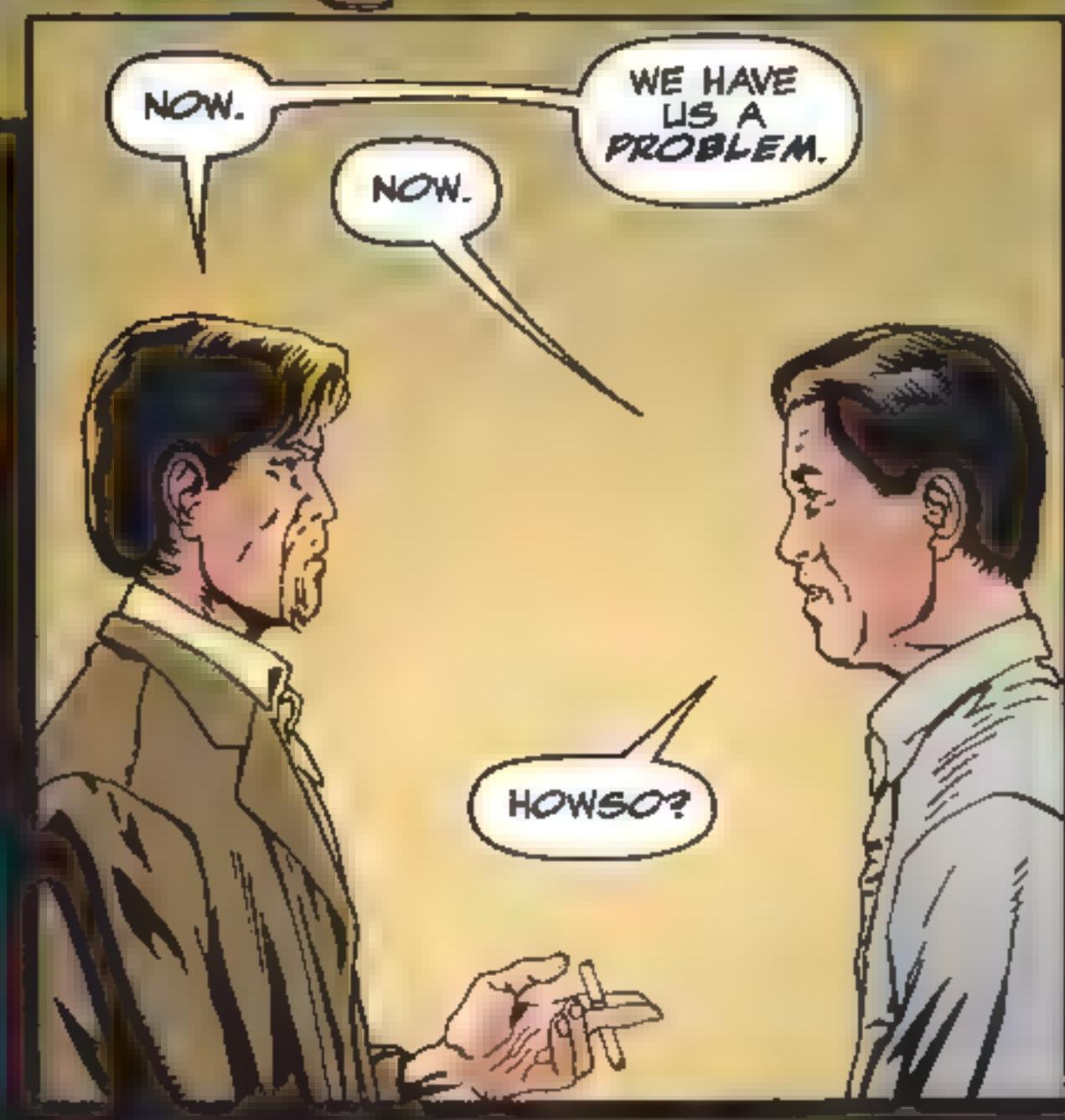
THE NEWSREADER LISTS THE DEAD FROM A MULTI-CAR FREEWAY HORROR. CARL TUNES OUT THE SADNESS AND HEARS HIS SON GURGLE AND SIGH AND SQUEAL. THE NOISES THAT EASE CARL'S HEART.

"LIFE IS GOOD" HE THINKS, AND BREATHES A SILENT PRAYER FOR THOSE WHO DIED THIS DAY.

HIS WIFE SMILES AT HIM. HE SMILES BACK.

AND THEN THERE'S A KNOCK AT THE DOOR.

OH GOD.



I'M TRYING TO CHANGE, EARL. I'M TRYING TO REFORM. EVERYONE WHO COULD LINK ME TO MY PAST SINS, I'VE SPOKEN TO.

SOME WERE REASONABLE. OTHERS... THANKFULLY ALL OF THEM BAD GUYS LIKE ME... THEM THAT WEREN'T REASONABLE, I HAD TO DEAL WITH.

I KNOW, 'CAUSE I WAS THE ONE MADE YOU DO IT. YOU DIDN'T HAVE MUCH OF A CHOICE, THOUGH YOU WERE PAID A SWEET SUM FOR YOUR TIME TOO, AS I RECALL.

ME, I DON'T SEE THAT AS A BAD, BAD THING. SURVIVAL. YOU'RE PUTTING FOOD ON THE TABLE. MILK FOR YOUR SON. A NICE PLACE FOR HIM TO GROW UP.

I CAN APPRECIATE THAT.

YOUR TRUCKING COMPANY MADE SOME DELIVERIES. TRANSPORTED SOME CARGO ACROSS STATE LINES FOR THE MOB.

THING IS, CAN YOU APPRECIATE WHAT I'M DOING? I'M TRYING TO TURN AROUND. IF I CAN PULL THIS OFF, I'LL BE THE BEST COP THIS CITY'S GOT. I SWEAR IT. AND THAT MEANS A LOT TO ME. A LOT. ENOUGH THAT IF I HAVE TO HURT YOU TO KEEP YOU QUIET I WILL, BUT I DON'T WANT TO. IT'S YOUR CHOICE.

YOU REMEMBER MY BROTHER, DETECTIVE?

DID I HURT HIM?

NO, YOU DRAGGED HIM OUT OF A BAR FIGHT ONCE WHERE HE MIGHT HAVE GOTTEN HIMSELF KILLED.

YOU WANT MY SILENCE? YOU GOT IT. I'M TRYING TO KEEP CLEAN, TOO. MY BUSINESS, MY LIFE AT HOME. HELL, IF I CAN QUIT SMOKING, THEN ANYTHING'S POSSIBLE. EVEN WHAT YOU'RE ATTEMPTING.

YOU'RE A LUCKY MAN, EARL. YOU GOT A WONDERFUL FAMILY. I ENVY YOU.

HERE'S YOUR COFFEE, DETECTIVE.

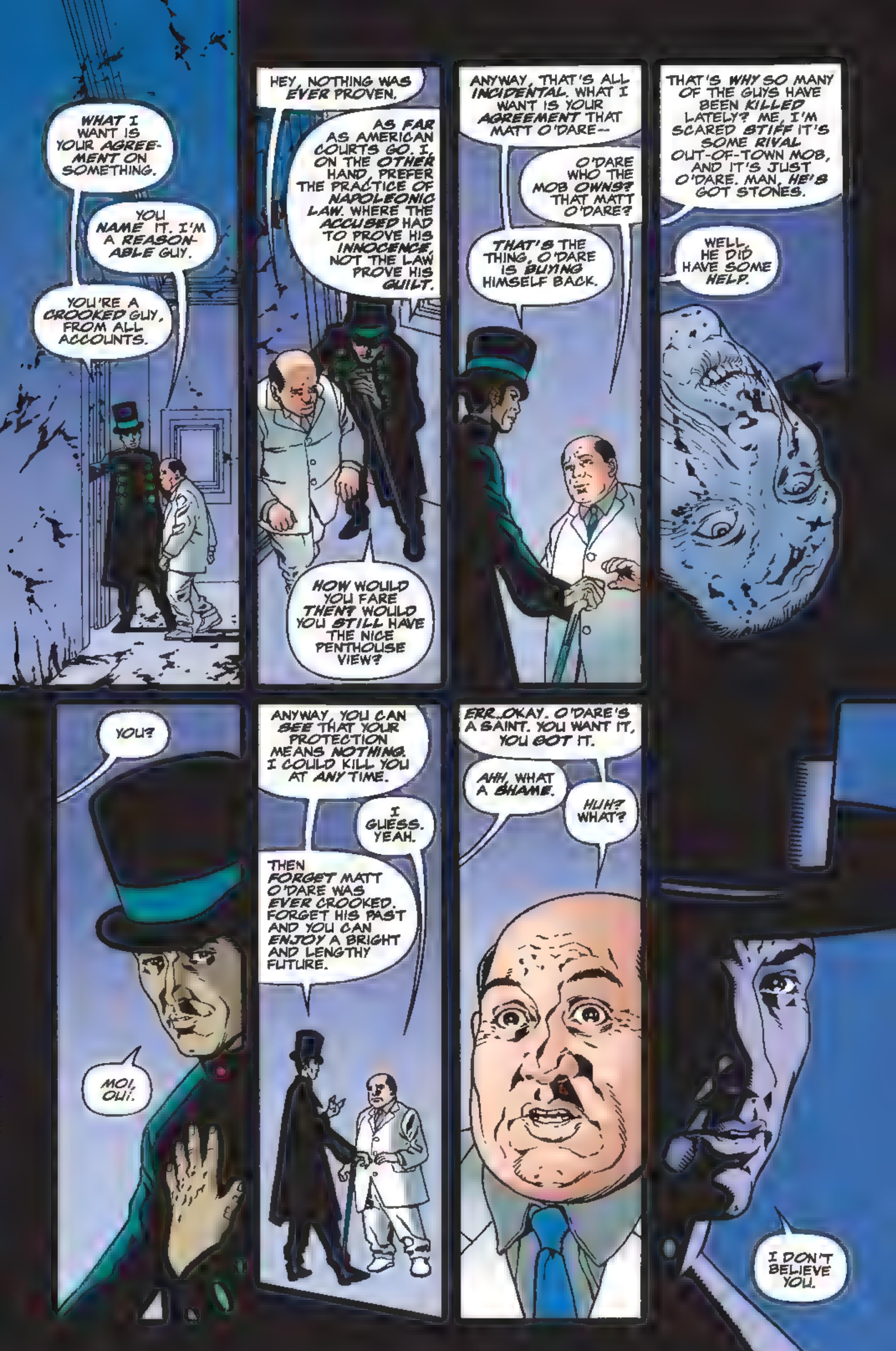
MATT, THE NAME'S MATT. HERE'S YOUR SON, MRS. EARL. I'LL SWAP YOU.

THIS IS A GREAT CITY, MATT. DON'T YOU THINK?

OH, YEAH...



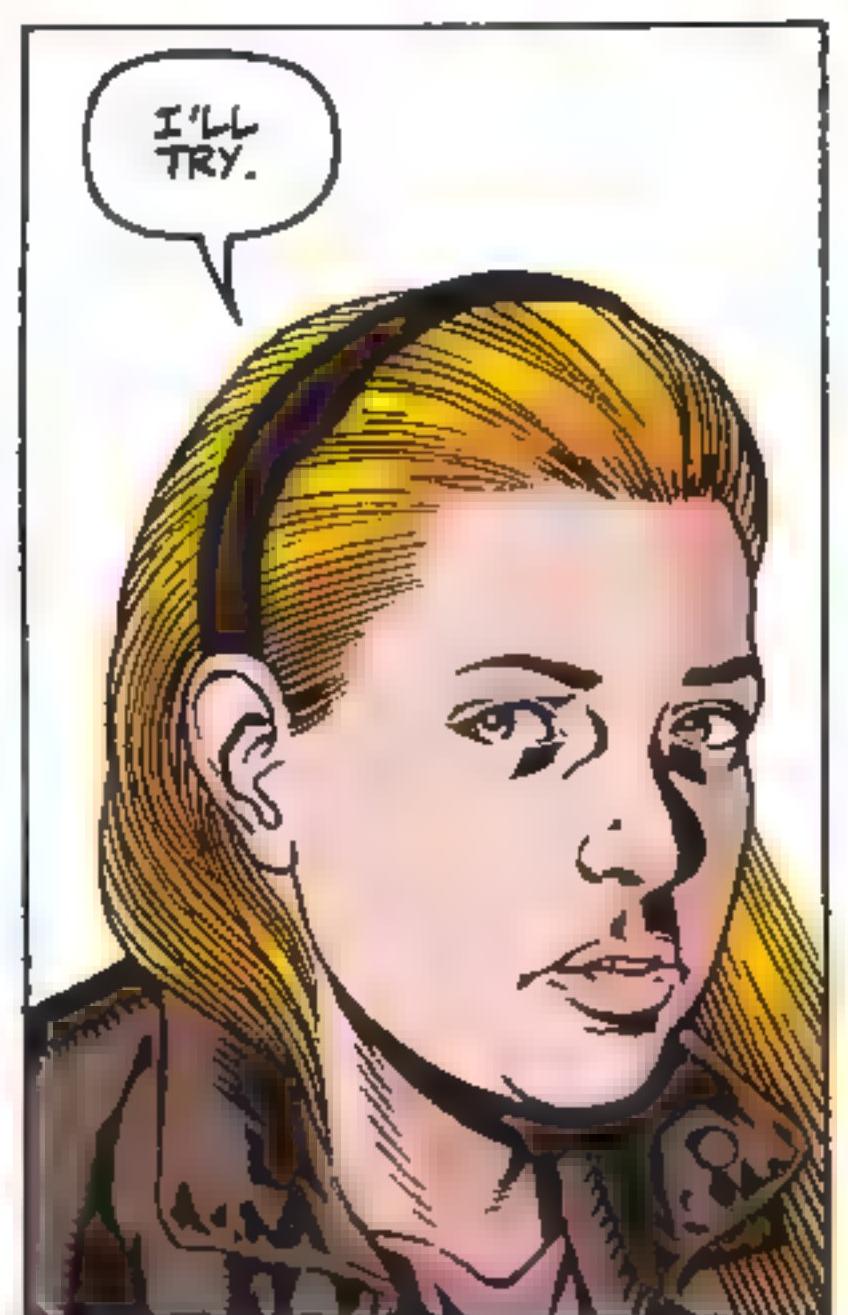
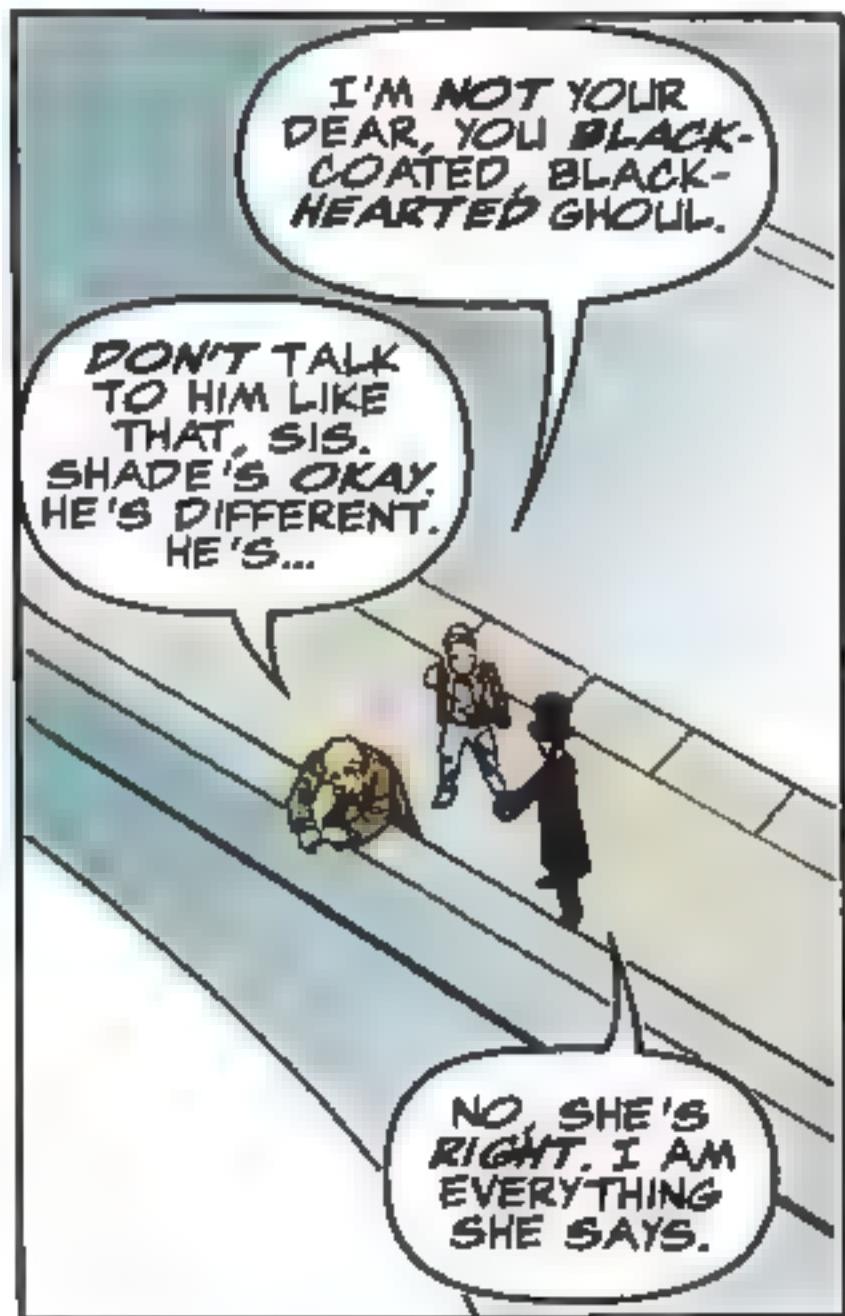
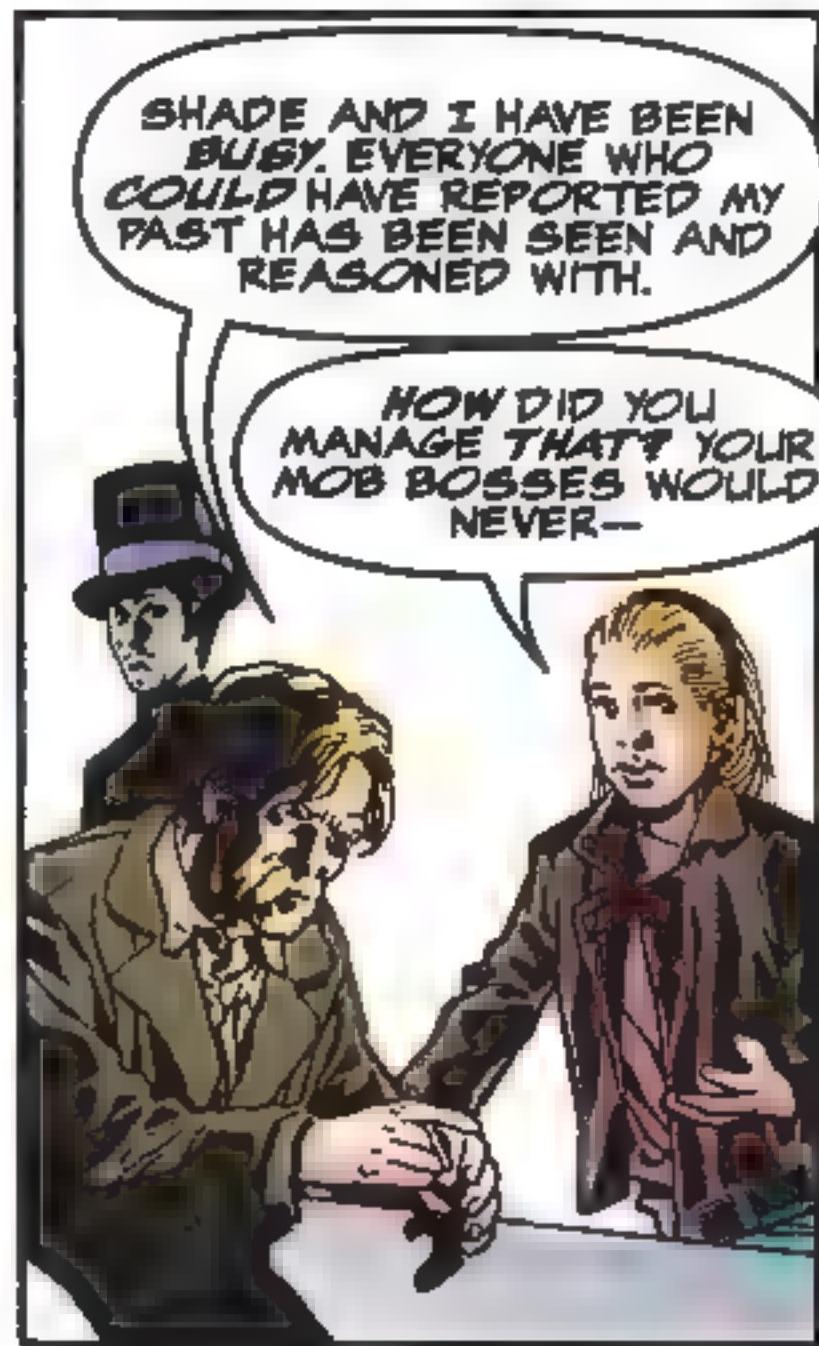
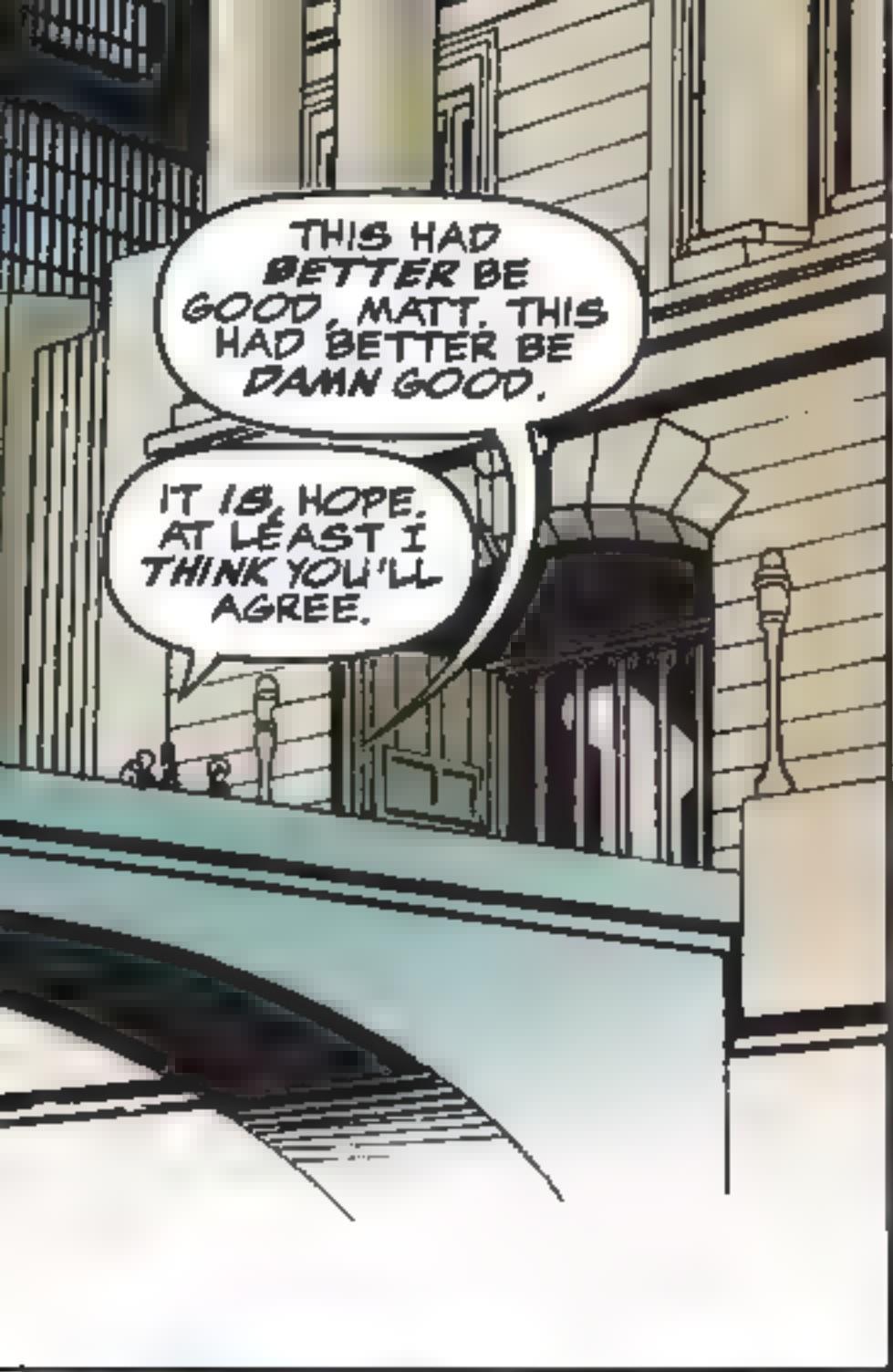


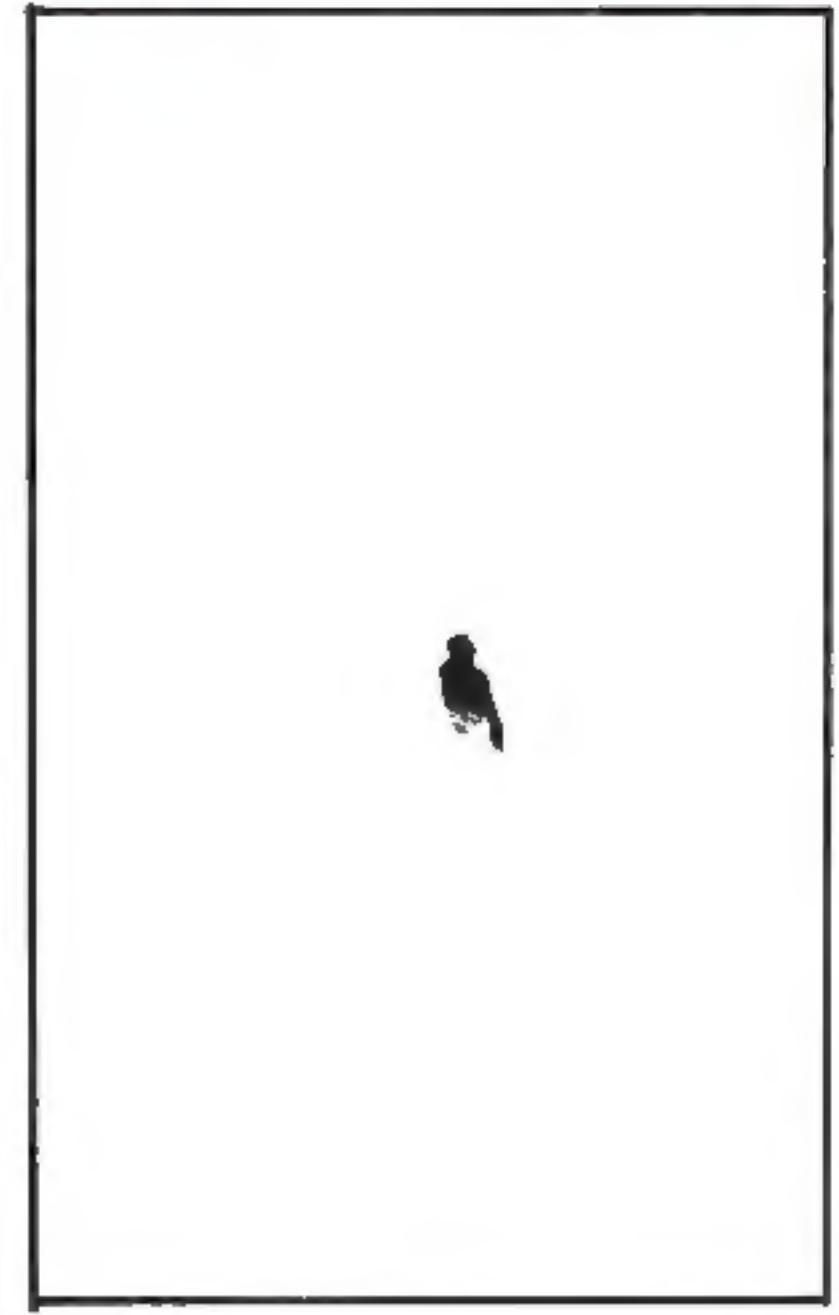
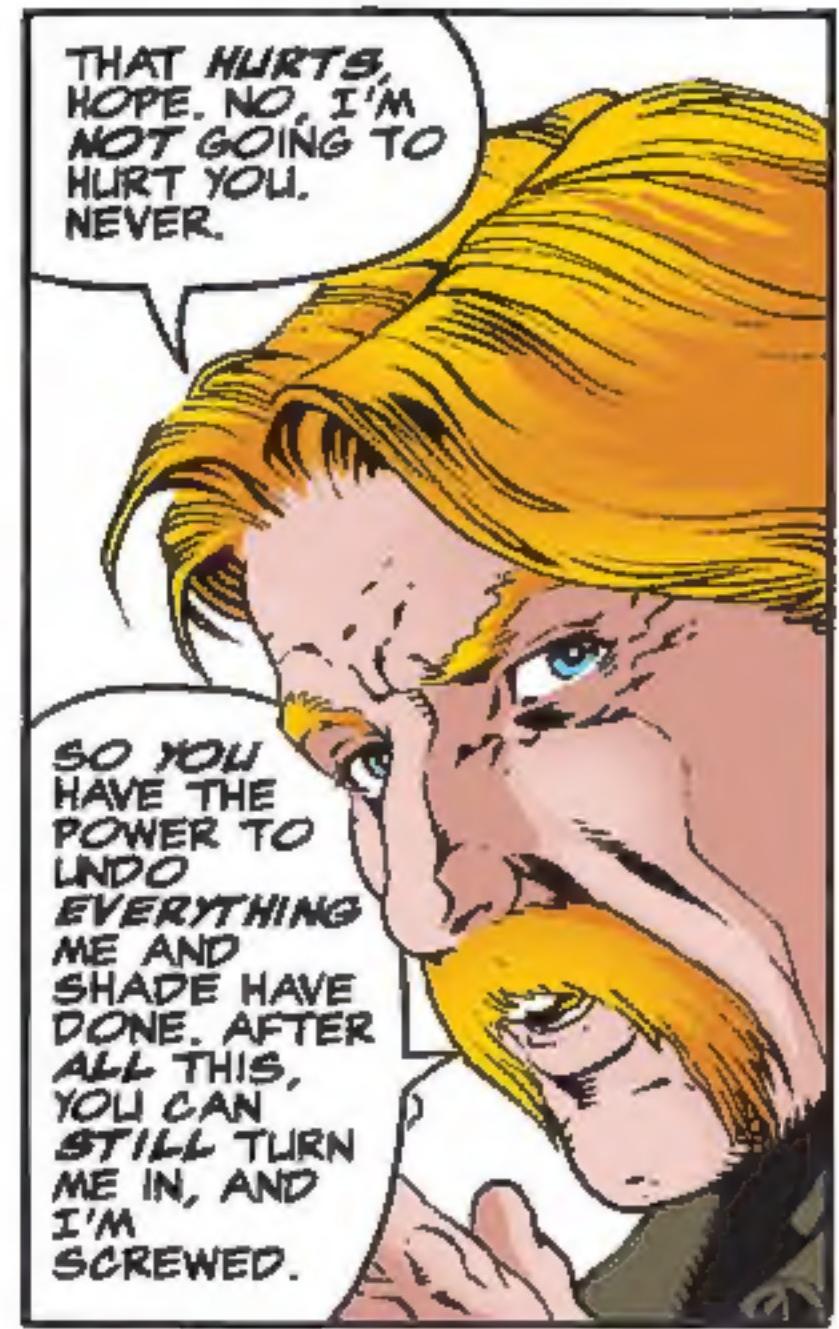
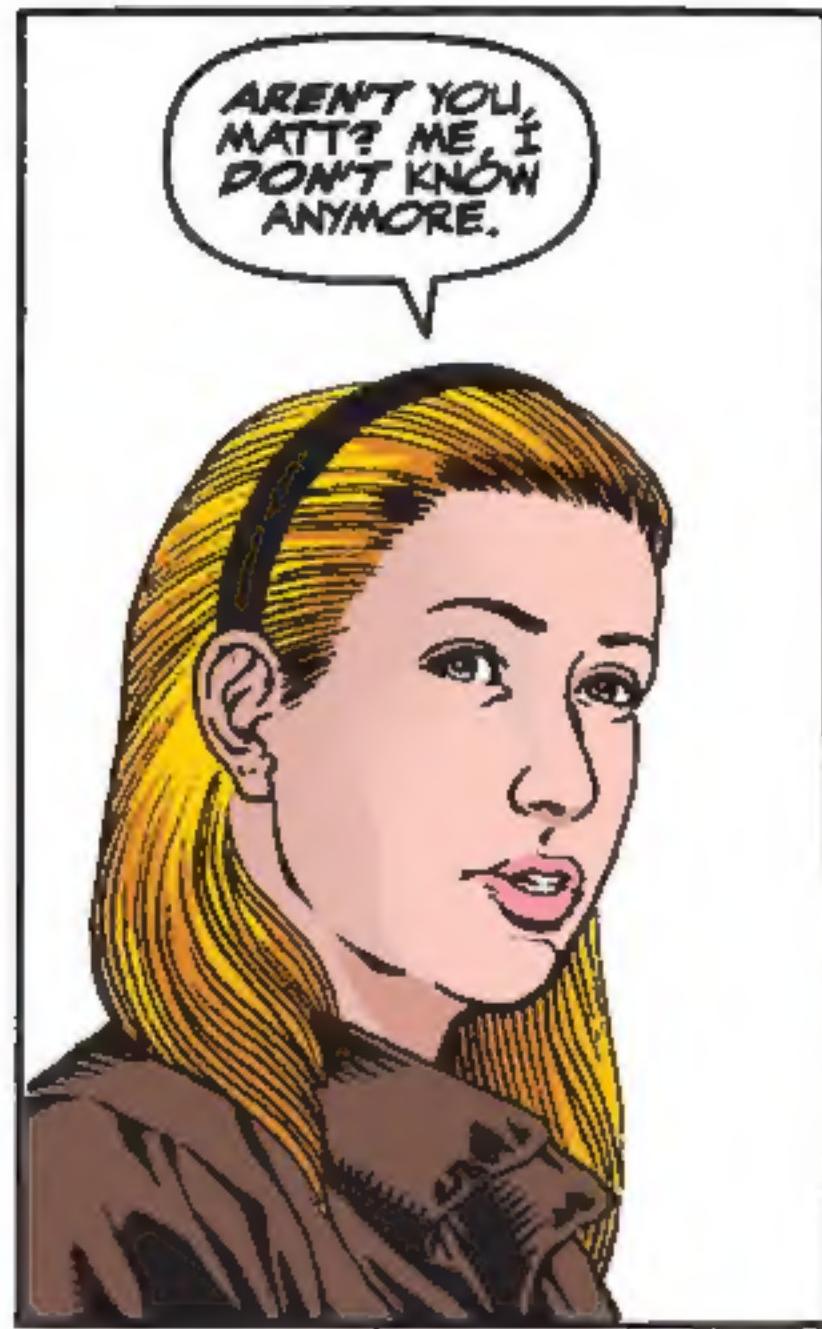


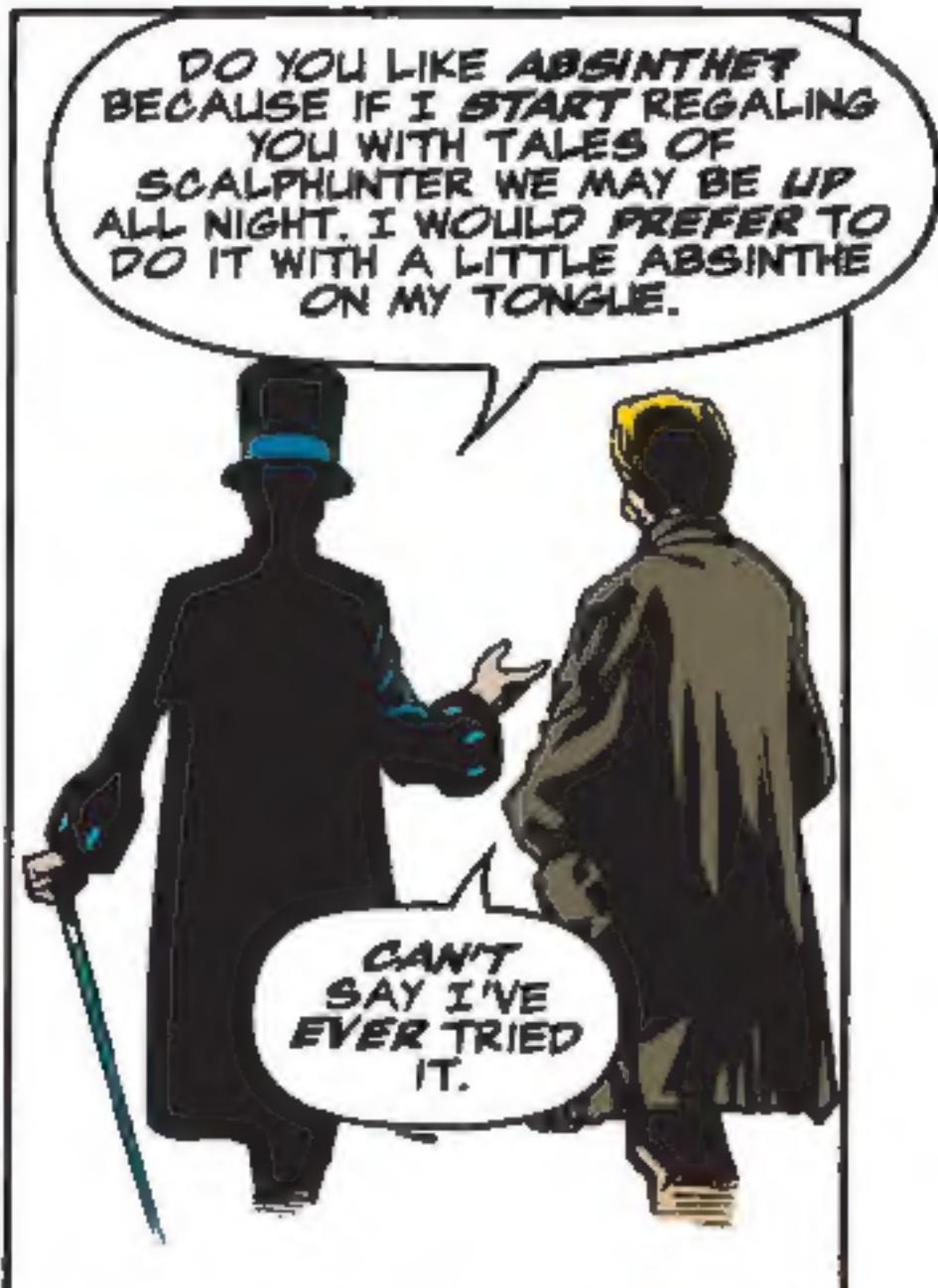
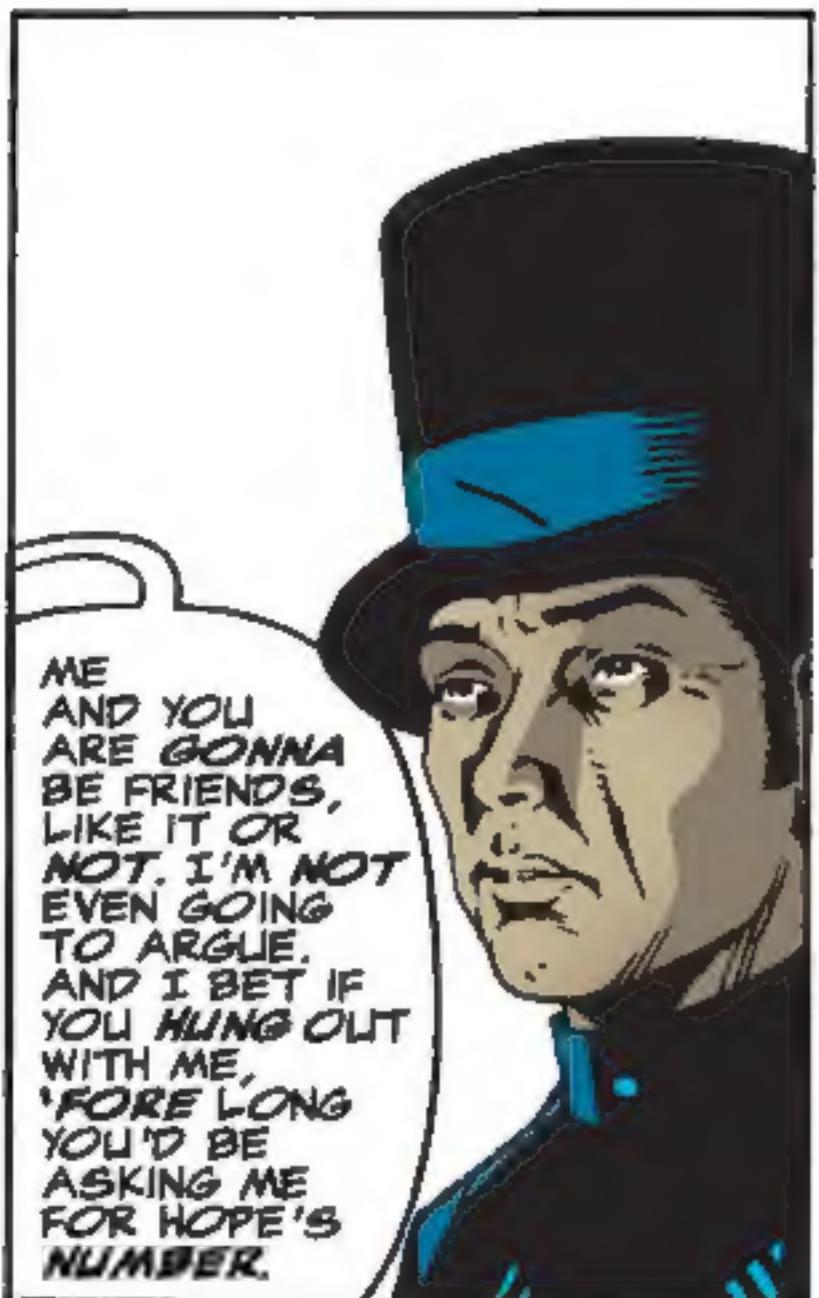
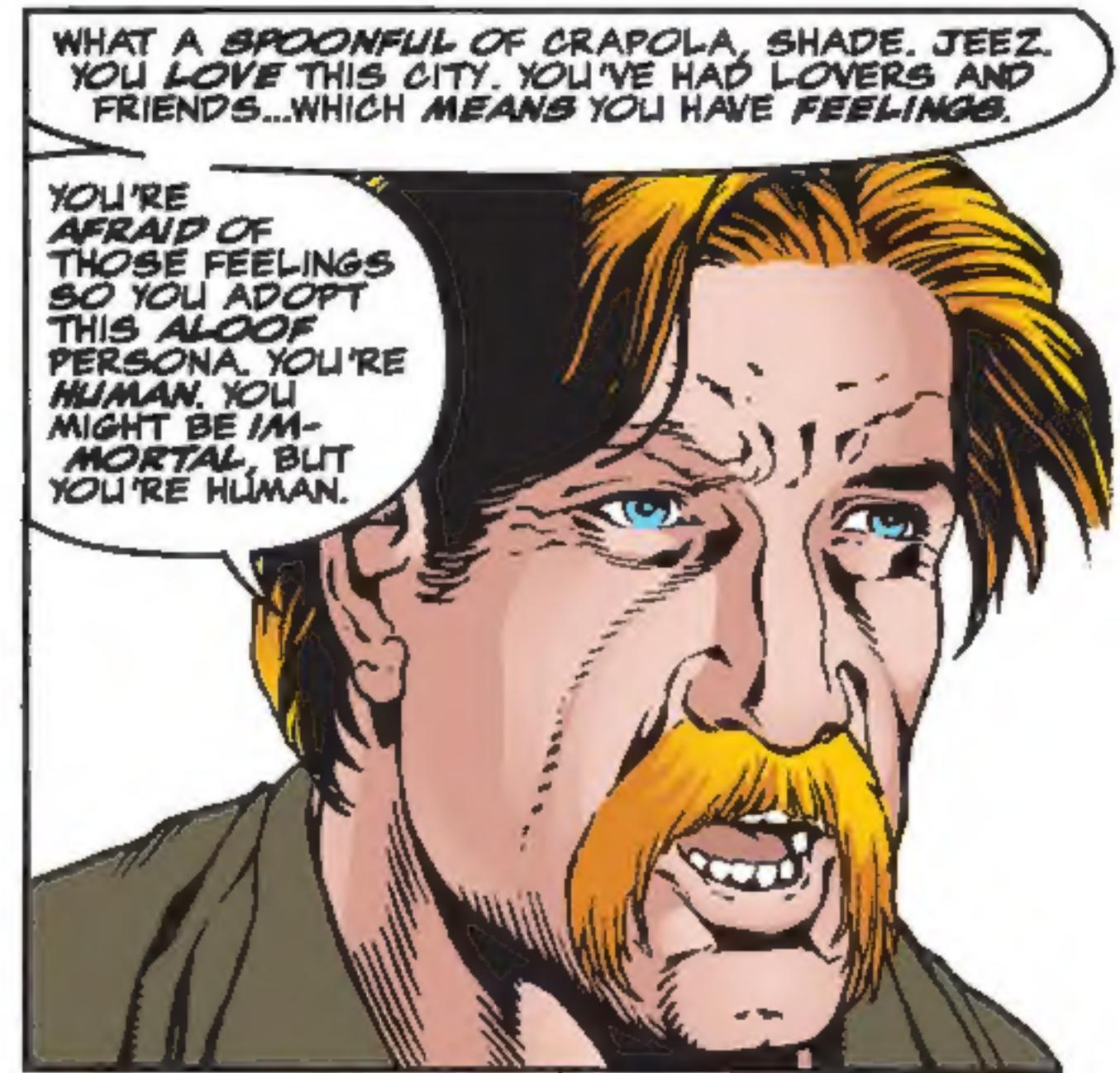


CLEARLY,
YOU ARE NO
GRADUATE OF
THE
STRASBERG
SCHOOL.











SO, BRIAN
SAVAGE... YOU
WERE GOING
TO TELL ME
ABOUT HIM.

OH, YES.
SCALPHUNTER.
GOODNESS,
THERE IS SO
MUCH TO
TELL.

WHERE
SHALL I
BEGIN...

THE END

Deadman Wade

"THIS IS WHAT
AWESOME
LOOKS LIKE!"

DCP